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IMPERIALISM AND CULTURALISM COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

by SAMIR AMIN

Capitalism is always ready to reward academics and publicists who provide plausible exculpatory explanations for its crises, failures, and crimes. Frequently the most effective are those that play upon the prejudices and superstitions of the prescientific past but in modern (or “post-modern”) and scientific form. Favored alternatives to historical materialist social science have been theories of world-historical process as the working out of closed and separate “civilizations” or “cultures.” These “civilizations” and “cultures” are not explained by history, but instead explain history. One current version is that of the publicist (and Harvard Professor) Samuel Huntington, justifying the crimes of imperialism as the product of cultural “incompatibility.” This is merely the most Authorized Version of a noise that can be heard today in all rhythms, tunes, and dissonances, often with its origins in racial pseudo-science only slightly disguised. Other varyingly sanitized and fragmentary versions are sometimes presented as “identity politics” or “communitarianism.” The Egyptian journal Al Ahram asked our good friend and frequent contributor Samir Amin to give his view of Huntington’s theory of “clash of civilizations.” His demonstration of why culturalism and imperialism reinforce each other, and how victims can be led to accept “difference” in place of equality and liberation, is today of potential utility everywhere.—The Editors

This Review of the Month is based on an article previously published in the December 28, 1995 issue of the Egyptian *Al Ahram Weekly*. It was translated from French by Pascale Ghazaleh and edited by Mona Anis, Assistant Editor. Samir Amin is a frequent contributor to *Monthly Review*, the author of *Re-reading the Postwar Period: An Intellectual Itinerary*, (Monthly Review Press, 1994) and director of Third World Forum in Dakar.

Dominant ideologies are by definition conservative: in order to reproduce themselves all forms of social organization must perceive themselves as the end of history. However, the first step of scientific thought consists precisely in seeking to go beyond the vision that social systems have of themselves. The conservative dominant discourse acquires strength through the vulgar practice of tossing together the “values” that it pretends rule the modern world. Into this pot are thrown principles of political organization (notions of legality, of the state, human rights, democracy), social values (freedom, equality, individualism), and principles of the organization of economic life (private property, the “free market”). This amalgamation then leads to the false claim that these values constitute an indivisible whole, arising from the same logical process. Hence the association of capitalism with democracy, as if this were an obvious or necessary linkage. However, history shows the contrary: democratic advances have been won through struggle, and are *not* the natural, spontaneous product of capitalist expansion.

I

Unless we want the “end of history” to be the end of the history of humanity and the planet through their destruction, capitalism must be transcended. As opposed to previous systems, which took thousands of years to unfold before exhausting their historical potentials, capitalism may ultimately appear as a brief parenthesis in history. In this time the elementary tasks of accumulation were accomplished, but only to pave the way for a superseding social order characterized by a superior, non-alienated rationality and based on an authentic planetary humanism. In other words, capitalism did in fact exhaust its positive historical potential very early on; it ceased to be the means (if only the “unconscious” means) by which progress finds its path, and now it has become an obstacle to progress.

Progress is not here identified as an abstract involuntary product linked with the expansion of capital, but is indepen-

dently defined through human criteria inconsistent with capital's real products, which are economic alienation, ecological destruction, and global polarization. This contradiction explains why the history of capitalism has been constituted from its origins by successive contrasting movements. During some periods the logic of capital's expansion is experienced as a unilateral force, and during others the intervention of anti-systemic forces limits the extent of the destruction inherent in its expansion.

The nineteenth century, with the unequal unfolding of the industrial revolution, proletarianization, and colonization, is characteristic of the first mode of capitalist expansion. But in spite of the hymns to the glory of capital, the violence of the system's real contradictions was driving history not to its end as announced in triumphalist "belle époque" proclamations, but to world wars, socialist revolutions, and the revolt of the colonized peoples. Re-established in post-First World War Europe, triumphant liberalism aggravated the chaos and paved the way for the illusory, criminal response that fascism was to provide.

It is therefore only from 1945 on, after the failure of fascism was complete, that a phase of civilized expansion was opened through the three historic compromises that Sovietism, social democracy, and the national liberation movements imposed. None of these compromises made a complete break with the logic of capitalism, but all of them imposed upon capital respect for the movements that had resulted from the explosion of the contradictions of capitalism. In their unfolding, these compromises effectively toned down the devastating effects of economic alienation and polarization. But this phase is now over. Progressively eroded by its successes, even if partial by definition, this logic of compromise went down with the collapse of the systems it had legitimated. One can only ask: Has the current return to the triumphalist discourse of liberalism, which believes once again in the end of history, only announced a tragic repetition of the earlier drama's successive scenes? Has this neoliberalism not already in record

time created an ideological void, and brought together the conditions for reinforced polarization?

The victims of this system will certainly react. They are already reacting. But what logic will they develop in opposition to that of capital? What type of compromises will they impose upon it? In the most radical hypothesis, what systems will they substitute for capitalism? The strategies around which popular mobilization had taken place in the preceding period (socialism and nation-building) have lost their credibility today as a result of a lack of renewal in their response to new elements in the permanent challenges of capitalism. One can already see which themes have appeared as substitutes: democracy (always tacitly limited to some privileged group) associated with forms of (usually ethnic) communalism, the recognition of which is legitimated by the "right to difference" and sometimes by ecologism; or cultural, and especially religious, originality.

II

The idea that cultural differences are not only real and important, but fundamental, permanent, and stable, that is to say transhistorical, is not a new one. It is, on the contrary, the basis of a common prejudice of all peoples at all times. All religions defined themselves in this way—as the end of history, the definitive answer. But progress in critical, social, and historical reflection (a *universalist* advance), and the construction of the social sciences have always required a continuous struggle against this prejudice of cultural immutability. Cultures and religions are continuously changing, and the change can be explained. The question is therefore not to demonstrate once again that this world-view is belied by real history. It is first to know why the absurd idea of "cultures" outside history is being presented today with so much force and conviction and next to understand the results of its political success.

Theories of cultural specificity are usually disappointing because they are based on the prejudice that differences are

always decisive, while similarities are the result only of coincidence. The desired results of the enterprise are obtained, *a priori*, on this basis. The differences adduced betray the banality of the reflection involved. To say, as Samuel Huntington does in his famous article *Clash of Civilizations*, that these differences are fundamental because they involve domains defining “relations between human beings and God, Nature, Power,” is at one and the same time to reduce cultures to religions, and to suppose that each culture develops specific fixed concepts of the relations in question in the categories predetermined by Huntington.

But history shows that these concepts are more flexible than is often believed. And that they are found in ideological systems that are inscribed in varying forms of historical evolution according to circumstances independent of the concepts themselves. Bad culturalists—are there any good ones?—yesterday explained China’s backwardness, and today its accelerated development, by the *same* Confucianism. The Islamic world of the tenth century appeared to many historians as not only more brilliant, but also as containing more potential for progress than Christian Europe during the same period. So what has changed to explain the later reversal of positions? Religion (more precisely, its interpretation by society), something else, or both? And how did these different instances of reality react with each other? Which were the motor forces? These are questions to which culturalism, even in formulations more rigorous than that of Huntington, which is a particularly crude version, is indifferent.

Furthermore, which “cultures” are we talking about? Those defined by religious space, by language, by “nation,” by homogeneous economic region, or by political system? Huntington has apparently chosen “religion” as the basis for his “seven groups,” which he defines as Occidental (Catholic and Protestant), Muslim, Confucian (although Confucianism is not a religion!), Japanese (Shintoist or Confucian?), Hindu, Buddhist, and Orthodox Christian. Huntington is clearly interested in cultural spaces that potentially explain significant divisions in the world today. There is no doubt, for example,

about why he needed to separate the Japanese from other Confucians and Orthodox Christians from Occidentals (is this because in State Department strategy, with which Huntington is openly and closely interested, the potential integration of Russia into Europe remains a veritable nightmare?). Nor is there much question as to why he ignores Africans, who, whether Christian, Muslim, or animist, still have a few specificities of their own (though Huntington's oversight here perhaps reflects only ignorance and banal racial prejudice), and even Latin Americans, for since they are Christians are they not as 'Occidental' as the Occidentals? And, if so, why are they underdeveloped? It would not be difficult to point out the further absurdities of this badly written page of third-rate Eurocentrism.

Huntington rehearses this elaborate taxonomy to arrive at the astonishing discovery that six of the seven groups are completely ignorant of Western values, among which we find the association by slight of hand characteristic of the genre: concepts defining capitalism ("the market") and democracy (associated with capitalism by *a priori* decree, regardless of historical fact). But does the market fare any worse in non-Western Japan than in Latin America? Are the market and democracy not recent phenomena in the West itself? Did medieval Christianity recognize itself in these purportedly transhistorically "Western" values?

Ideologies—especially religions—are no doubt important. But for two hundred years we have been developing an analysis that situates ideology within society, and can identify functional analogies in different societies subject to similar historical conditions. Such analogies among the social functions of religious ideologies can be seen clearly over and above their particularities. In this framework diverse traditional "cultural spaces" have not disappeared, far from it. But they have been deeply transformed from within and without by modern capitalism (what Huntington calls, wrongly, "Western culture"). I have arrived at the conclusion that this culture of capitalism (and not of "the West") was globally dominant, and that it was this domination that emptied ancient cultures of

their content. Where capitalism is most developed its modern culture has been internally substituted for ancient cultures, such as for medieval Christianity in Europe and North America, and in a precisely parallel fashion for the originally Confucian culture of Japan. On the other hand, in the capitalist peripheries the domination of capitalist culture did not fully manage to transform radically the ancient local cultures. This difference has nothing to do with the specific characters of diverse traditional cultures, but everything to do with the forms of capitalist expansion, both central and peripheral.

In its global expansion, capitalism revealed the contradiction between its universalist pretensions and the polarizations it produces in material reality. Emptied of all content, the values invoked by capitalism in the name of universalism (individualism, democracy, freedom, equality, secularism, the rule of law, etc.) come to appear as lies to the victims of the system, or as values appropriate only for "Western culture." This contradiction is obviously permanent, but each phase of deepening globalization (including the one we are living through) lays bare its violence. The system then discovers, thanks to the pragmatism that characterizes it, the means of managing the contradiction. It suffices that each should accept the "difference," that the oppressed cease to demand democracy, individual freedom, and equality, in order to substitute the "appropriate" values, which are usually the complete opposite. In this useful model, the victims then internalize their subaltern status, allowing capitalism to unfold without encountering any serious obstacle from the reinforced polarization its expansion of necessity engenders.

Imperialism and culturalism are thus always good bedfellows. The first expresses itself in the arrogant certitude that "the West" has arrived at the end of history, that the formula for managing the economy (private property, the market), political life (democracy), society (individual freedom), are *a priori* interconnected, definitive, and unsurpassable. The real contradictions that may be observed are declared to be imaginary, or are claimed to be produced by absurd resistance to submission to capitalist rationality. For all other peoples,

the choice is simple: to accept this false unity of "Western values," or to closet themselves in their own cultural specificities. If, given the polarization that "market" and imperialism must produce, the first of these two options is impossible (as is the case for most of the world), then cultural conflict will occupy the foreground. But in this conflict the dice are loaded: "the West" will always win, the others will always be beaten. This is why the others' culturalist option can not only be tolerated, but can even be encouraged. It only poses a threat to the victims. Given this situation, and contrary to mythological discourse on the "end of history" and the "clash of civilizations," critical analysis seeks to define the real stakes and challenges. Riddled with contradictions that cannot be transcended through its own logic, capitalism is only a stage in history, and the values it proclaims are presented deprived of their historical context, of the limits and contradictions of capitalism, and thus made empty.

The self-satisfied discourse of "the West" does not respond to these challenges, since it deliberately ignores them. But the culturalist discourse of the victims bypasses them as well, since it transfers the conflict outside the field of the real stakes—these it gives to the enemy—to find refuge in the imaginary space of culture. What matter, then, if Islam for instance is firmly seated at the controls of local society, if within the hierarchy of the world economy the rules of the system lock Islamic societies into the comprador status of the bazaar? Like fascism yesterday, today's culturalisms work through lies: they are in fact means of managing the crisis, despite their pretensions to constitute its solution. But looking forward, and not back, means that real questions must be faced: how are we to combat economic alienation, waste, global polarization; and how are we to create conditions that allow the genuine advance of universalist values beyond their formulation by historical capitalism?

Simultaneously a critique of cultural heritage suggests itself. The modernization of Europe would have been unthinkable without the critique to which Europeans submitted their own past and their own religion. And would that of

China have been begun without the critique of the past, and especially of Confucian ideology, to which Maoism devoted itself? Afterwards, certainly, the heritage (Christian in one case, Confucian in the other) was re-integrated within the new culture, but only after it had been radically transformed by a revolutionary critique of the past. On the other hand, in the Islamic world, the stubborn refusal to engage in any critique of the past accompanies (not by coincidence) the continuous degradation of the countries comprising this cultural space in the hierarchy of the world system.

III

Usually, after having analyzed a situation, one then reflects on possible future developments. Gradual erosion of the compromises on which post-war capitalist expansion has unfolded has opened a new phase in which capital, freed from any constraint, has attempted to impose a utopia of world management in conformity with the unilateral logic of its financial interests. This first conclusion leads to the identification of the new dual objectives of the dominant powers' strategy: to deepen economic globalization, and to destroy the political capacity of resistance.

Managing the world like a market implies a maximum fragmentation of political forces, or in other words a practical destruction of state forces (an objective that anti-state ideology attempts to legitimize) in favor of "communities" (ethnic, religious, or other), and in favor of primitive ideological solidarities such as religious fundamentalism. For the project of global management, the United States having become the only global policeman, the ideal is that not one other state (and especially not one independent military power) worthy of the name would survive. All other powers would be restricted to the modest tasks of daily market management. The European project itself is conceived in these terms as the communal management of the market and no more, while beyond its borders maximum fragmentation (as many Slovenias, Macedonias, Chechnyas as possible) is systemati-

cally sought. Themes of "democracy" and "peoples' rights" are mobilized to obtain results that cancel peoples' capacity to make use of the democracy and rights in whose name they have been manipulated. Praise of specificity and difference, ideological mobilization around ethnic or culturalist objectives, are the engine of impotent communalism, and shift the struggle onto the ground of ethnic cleansing or religious totalitarianism.

In the framework of this logic the "clash of civilizations" becomes possible, and even desirable. To my mind, Huntington's intervention on the subject must be read in this way. In the same way as in the past he used to produce texts legitimizing support for Third World dictatorships in the name of "development," he produces today a text that legitimizes the means deployed to manage the crisis through the polarization of conflicts around "cultural incompatibilities." This is nothing less than a strategy that imposes an arena of conflict that guarantees victory to "the West," as I have pointed out.

Events seem to confirm in the immediate term, through the multiplication of ethnic and religious conflicts, the effectiveness of this strategy. But do they therefore prove the thesis of "natural" cultural conflict? I have expressed strong reservations on this subject. Violent affirmations of "specificity" are rarely the spontaneous product of the peoples involved. They are almost always formulated by minorities in power or aspiring to leadership. It is also clear that the ruling classes made most fragile by the global evolution of the system are those that have recourse most frequently to these culturalist or ethnic strategies. This is the case in the countries of Eastern Europe, which have been struck by a cataclysm of uncommon proportions. But it is also the case in the Islamic world and in sub-Saharan Africa, also struck off the list of competitive industrial producers and therefore marginalized in the world system. These negative nationalisms are completely functional from the perspective of capitalist crisis management. Nor has the foreign policy and intelligence establishment of the United States, of which Huntington is a functionary, failed

to utilize “difference” and “cultural incompatibility” against popular movements that have offered resistance (within the fading framework of the post-war compromises) to the expansion of capital. Assistance given to figures such as, for example, Savimbi in Angola, Hekmatyar in Afghanistan, and Tudjman in Yugoslavia, shows that the most frightful instances of “cultural conflict” today can be seen as somewhat less than “natural.” Local cultures, in their specificity, and in their relations with the world system and the dominant capitalist culture, are taken by themselves insufficient for the deduction of a general theory, as culturalism would suppose. The true keys capable of explaining the differences between the regions of the world are found *outside* the field of culture. There is no systematic clash of cultures: there are conflicts that are fundamentally of another nature, some of which however include a cultural aspect. Therefore in order to define a strategy for popular struggle, we must start from an analysis of the contradictions of capitalism and of the forms they take in the particular historical period we are living through.

LEFT FEMINISM AND THE RETURN TO CLASS

by JOANNE NAIMAN

Most contemporary feminist theory has owed at least some of its substantive content to the works of Marx and Engels. And yet a closer examination of the “marriage” of Marxism and feminism—to use Heidi Hartmann’s now well-known phrase—indicates a troubled relationship.¹ The various attempts to integrate these two theoretical frameworks have not yet led to either a fully elaborated social analysis of gender inequality or a clear set of proposals for eliminating it. Indeed, much of what shall be referred to in this paper as “left feminism” has increasingly lost its way. This trend can be linked, at least in part, to what Ellen Mieksins Wood has described as a “retreat from class.”²

The Retreat from Class

Left feminist thought has commonly presented Marxism as a theory of oppression. In explaining the roots of socialist feminism, Hansen and Philipson write:

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The women who first began to write from the point of view of both Marxism and feminism found their intellectual roots in Marxist categories of thought. . . . For them, Marxism systematically explained people's oppression, provided a "scientific" understanding of historical change, and offered a vision of a truly just society. . . .³

This approach to Marx had already become popular in what is generally referred to as the "new left," particularly with regard to studies of the Third World. By centering on oppression, the focus was on the victims of social inequality and their personal experience of it. Given the focus of radical feminism on the personal lives of women, there was an easy conjuncture between that perspective and theories of the new left. However, while the roots of both were ostensibly Marxist, the "oppression theorists" quickly came to criticize what they felt was the economic determinism of traditional Marxism, and its limited view of the working class as the most revolutionary force in history. These theorists focused on oppressed groups distinct from the working class as central to social transformation. This includes peasants, racial and ethnic minorities, students, and, for radical and left feminists, women.

The argument that women constitute a revolutionary category, either alone or in conjunction with other social groupings, has formed the undercurrent of much left feminist theory, particularly socialist feminism. Socialist feminism developed out of earlier radical feminist theory that saw women's oppression as both the first and most overarching oppression in modern societies. Socialist feminism acknowledged the importance of class inequality, but always by adding it on to, or seeing it as an adjunct to, gender inequality. While Hartmann claimed that, in the "marriage" of Marxism and feminism, "the two had become one and that one is Marxism," in reality exactly the opposite occurred.⁴ "A View of Socialist Feminism," an early manifesto of this theoretical framework, clearly articulates this position: (1) Sexism has a life of its own. It has existed throughout human history, under every economic system. (2) Capitalism determines the particular forms of sexism in capitalist society. The subjugation of women contributes to capitalist domination of society.⁵

Most left feminists today would likely repudiate the ahistoricity of the above position. However, while left feminism generally includes some Marxist terminology and an anti-capitalist sentiment, it has leaned toward an analysis that, like radical feminism, generally sees all men as the ultimate perpetrators and beneficiaries of gender inequality. This position was evident in early socialist feminist works. For example, Dorothy Smith has stated that:

what begins to emerge is a built-in complicity within Marxist thinking and within the working class itself with the institutions by which the ruling class dominates society. It is an alliance across class and among men against women. . . . It is a division which in fact aligns men in this respect on the other side of the class struggle, that is, on the side of the ruling class.⁶

However, the notion of men as the oppressors and women as the oppressed proved problematic. Since subjective feelings were at the core of the analysis, it soon became evident that "women" as a category did not seem to share a common oppression. Left feminism acknowledged this problem, as well as the fact that the women's movement had to that point been dominated by a rather narrow stratum of white, university-educated women. In response, there was increased recognition of diversity, that is, of distinctions within the category "women."

However, the attempt to resolve one supposed problem, the over-determinism of "sisterhood," led to yet another. If, for example, each category of oppression creates a different experiential reality, if say, aboriginal women or working-class women or lesbians each experience their "women-ness" in a different way, what is it that can bring them together? What is the goal they share in common? When does similarity supersede difference, or vice versa? How does one resolve the oppressions that may occur within the movement and within specific groups (e.g. racism within lesbian organizations or homophobia in the trade union movement)? How do we make sense of gender inequality? Most importantly, how do we struggle for change?

Left feminists have argued against the creation of a “key variable,” “principal contradiction,” “hierarchy of issues,” or “hierarchy of oppression,” but rather for an inter-connection of variables and, in feminist practice, unity in diversity. However, left feminists themselves create their own hierarchy of issues, with race, gender, class, and sexual orientation generally selected as key variables. On the other hand, variables such as ethnicity, nationality, physical, or mental disabilities, age, religion, or physical appearance—to name but a few—are included less often or not at all. In the end, left feminists, no less than Marxists, are privileging variables, but simply different ones. What is ultimately being rejected, then, by left feminists is the Marxist notion of the primacy of class.

In this sense, left feminism has generally conformed to Wood’s description of the theoretical shift away from historical materialism, and hence from the very basis of Marxist analysis. Wood lays out the fascinating historical and ideological development of a non-class, or in fact anti-class position: from Maoism through the theories of Althusser, Poulantzas, Laclau, and others, onto their practical application in Eurocommunism, and onward into the right-wing social-democratic theories of the 1980s. Left feminism has certainly not been opposed to these developments.⁷ Indeed the language of much left feminism has mirrored that of Althusser and Poulantzas. Wood describes the essential elements of the retreat from class:

The “new true” socialism (NTS), which prides itself on a rejection of Marxist “economism” and “class-reductionism,” has virtually excised class and class struggle from the socialist project. The most distinctive feature of this current is the autonomization of ideology and politics from any social basis, and more specifically, from any class foundation . . . the NTS proposes that, because there is no necessary correspondence between economics and politics, the working class can have no privileged position in the struggle for socialism. Instead, a socialist movement can be constructed by ideological and political means which are relatively (absolutely?) autonomous from economic class conditions. . . . These theoretical devices effectively expel the working class from the centre of the

socialist project and displace class antagonisms by cleavages of ideology or "discourse."⁸

The retreat of left feminism from class occurs not because it *eliminates* class from the analysis, but rather because class has been transformed, as Wood indicates, from its centrality within Marxist thought to simply one of many oppressions experienced by individuals within capitalism.

Most left feminists, in an attempt to oppose what they see as the over-determination or essentialism of Marxism, stress the interrelationship of elements. Marxism is then criticized as reductionist, that it reduces all struggles to that of class. Such charges are nothing more than "straw Marxist" arguments.⁹ Gender inequality is not equivalent to class inequality, and the experience of women is real and not reducible to anything else. However, if we are to understand that experience, we must place it within particular social formations where power is not equitably distributed, and where the struggle for power is in constant flux and change. While left feminism is certainly correct in arguing that various inequalities and oppressions are dialectically interrelated, such positions leave us at an analytical impasse. If all we can know is that everything within a society is interconnected, how are we to evaluate the elements within a society, or to assess where power is based?

The Return to Class

A full understanding of gender inequality requires a close examination of the objective characteristics of social systems, as well as their connection to individual behavior. Marxism enables us to explain how culture and forms of social organization are not simply mysterious unexplainable creations, but are linked to particular relations of *power*. The "return to class" must therefore begin with a structural analysis of power, including power determined by gender, within capitalist systems. The question of power is crucial in social science, because its distribution affects all aspects of our personal and social lives. However, the concept of power is

poorly analyzed and understood. In standard introductory sociology textbooks it is often ignored altogether. In analyses of gender inequality, concepts such as “male dominance,” “male power,” and “patriarchy” are seldom worked through or properly explicated.

Power is a complicated concept because, while we may all feel the results of it, it is hard to locate both what it is and where it is. Power, put simply, is the ability of an individual or groups to carry out their will even when opposed by others. Power is largely a result of the control one has over the resources of a society, including its human resources, oneself and others. It exists within relationships and within broader social institutions. We first experience power inequities in the family, where, as a child, we learn that parents have more control over us than we do of them, and that they also have greater control over the family resources. Most social scientists understand that power, while abstract, attaches itself to real people on the basis of their membership in a particular group or category.

Discourse theorists, drawing on the approach of Michel Foucault, have put forward explications of the workings of power almost totally within the realm of the subjective. Such theorists see power as negotiated between individuals in the process of social interaction. They ‘deconstruct’ individuals and leave them at the mercy of ‘power’; in the process, our attention is directed away from any possibility of collective political action.¹⁰ Similarly, for those who do not wish to privilege class, the refusal to distinguish, to weigh the importance of, and to evaluate different elements within a social system thwarts any analysis of power. In this schema, power is diffuse and unmeasurable. It is everywhere and it is nowhere. The consequence is to make the formulation of specific strategies and tactics for change impossible.

In comparison, Marxists see power as being centered in the external, material world, rather than simply in people’s heads. Therefore, the complete elimination of its internalized form will be impossible until power inequities within society are first removed. In any society where private property and

social classes exist, those who own the means of production will dominate. This is most obvious in the economic sphere, where those who own the productive units can decide what to produce, how to produce it, where to produce it, and so on. But the power of ownership goes far beyond mere economic control, and those who own the means of production also come to have power in the political and ideological spheres as well. Indeed, no owning class could maintain its position for long if it did not effectively control all three spheres within a society.

Working people are not powerless, although their power is far less than that of the owning class. But the power of the working class is embodied in one inescapable fact—it is their labor that produces the profits for capital. Without workers, the capitalist class could not survive. The other connected source of potential power for workers is their sheer numbers; waged and salaried workers and their families constitute the vast majority in all advanced capitalist societies. It is these characteristics—in conjunction with their discipline and organizational capacity—that give the working class, in Marxist analysis, centrality in terms of social change; as a result, it is this class (in alliance with various social movements) that is best placed to resist the power of capital. This is not the privileging of class, but rather, an assessment of the structural power, both actual and potential, of different groups within a society.

How does gender equality fit into the Marxist notions of power? Most Marxists agree with Engels that gender inequality long predates capitalism. The capitalist owning class inherited a social system with a long history of a gendered division of labor both inside and outside the household, and a deeply held set of beliefs and values that justified and maintained gender inequality.¹¹ However, as this new ruling class *benefited* from the already existing inequality both economically and ideologically, it therefore had no interest in eliminating it; indeed, it has had every interest in strengthening it.¹²

In Marxist argumentation, then, the class with economic power in capitalist systems has both a desire to maintain gender inequality, and the capacity to do so (within the limits of class struggle). It is the owning class that holds ultimate control over the economy, it is the owning class that can exert the ultimate pressure over state agencies, and it is the owning class that is the dominant influence over ideology. The power this class wields is vast, and, as capitalism advances, it becomes more concentrated and centralized. This is not to say that gender inequality is determined in any mechanical way by the ruling class, merely that it must be understood within the context of its existence and its power.

However, while it may be true that gender inequality benefits capital, it would be wrong to state that each element of it is essential to capital. The argument made by some theorists that the traditional family and the patriarchal structure embodied in it are necessary for capital does not adequately explain the recent changes vis-a-vis women's large-scale movement into paid labor. As Ehrenreich argues with regard to women's unpaid work in the home:

No matter how valuable the services of a full-time homemaker may be, fewer and fewer men earn enough to support one. . . . If women's work were as essential to the status quo as socialist-feminist theory argued, capitalism should have been seriously weakened by this withdrawal of women's labor. Yet no one is arguing, for example, that the decline in American productivity is due to unironed shirts and cold breakfasts. Nor has any sector of capital come forth and offered to restore the male family wage so that women can get back to their housework.¹³

The "family wage" system, in which the wages of the male alone sustained the whole family, developed within capitalism and appears to be disappearing within capitalism. It is within capitalism that women are re-entering the paid labor force in large numbers, and the socialization of domestic labor is advancing.¹⁴ As a result, the gendered division of labor, both in the workplace and in the home, is slowly beginning to break down. Such trends, while a small setback for capital, will not bring it to its knees. Capital, as we have

learned from history, has proven to be amazingly flexible and adaptable.

Status and Power

Of course, class is not the only determinant of power within societies. There are also differences in power as a result of status inequalities. A status is any position within a social structure; statuses can be ranked by comparing the privileges and obligations that accrue to each. In societies as large and complex as ours, many such inequalities of power exist. Certain occupational categories, such as doctors or judges, have more power than others. Men have more power than women; certain ethnic and racial groups, for historic reasons, have more power than others, and so on.

However, the power that parents have over children, for example, is actually quite small when placed within an entire social system. It exists only for a certain period of time and over certain matters. A parent who goes beyond what is deemed to be acceptable, for example by molesting their child, may well find themselves in prison. And the power that accrues to a parent is only applicable to their offspring. The same man who regularly abuses his wife and children, and therefore seems all-powerful to them, may be almost totally without power in his place of employment. Power linked to status may exist for long periods of time in relatively autonomous form. Nonetheless, it must ultimately be placed within a broader social and historical context.

For radical feminists it is men as a category who are the main beneficiaries of gender inequality. At the level of the family, it is argued that men compel women to do the vast majority of domestic labor and child care free of charge. It is also argued that at the broader level, the lack of competition from women has given men the better jobs, better chances for promotion, better chances for an education and so on. Some writers, such as MacKinnon, also believe dominance over women gives men both psychological and sexual satisfaction.¹⁵

But while men may indeed achieve some benefits from gender inequality, they have paid a price for them as is now being noted by many men.¹⁶ At the economic level, the lower wages of women keep all wages down.¹⁷ Moreover, since most men are members of family units, the lower wages of women decreases their total family wage packet. For those men who are the traditional family breadwinner, there are constant pressures of being able to provide for their family. In this situation job mobility is restricted and worker activism restrained. And for a man, unemployment is experienced as a direct attack on his masculinity.

Men also pay a high price in terms of their health and safety. Proportionally more men than women die as a result of heart attacks, strokes, suicides, automobile accidents, and so on, and many more men than women are killed or maimed every year in industrial accidents. Much harder to measure, but no less consequential, is the psychological price men pay for their few privileges. For many, a life devoted to getting ahead in their occupations has meant higher death rates from the diseases of stress, and a life devoid of intimacy.

The use of the term "status" is not meant to belittle the nature of the power of men over women, but rather, to locate its basis and its formulation. "Men" as a category *do* hold real, at times terrifying, power over women. In fact, it is power reflected in status differentials, rather than class differentials, that we experience most directly and often most intensely. That is, on a day-to-day level, one will feel and have to respond directly to the power wielded by one's husband, one's supervisor, or one's teacher. The power wielded by the ruling class, while more all-encompassing, is experienced in more indirect and abstract ways. People do not have nightmares about the bourgeoisie!

The power of the owning class is always filtered through other forms of power, and with the advance of capitalism the power of this class is becoming more and more removed from direct experience at the very same time that it has an ever-greater effect on one's life. In fact, the process of concentration and centralization of capital, combined with globalization, has made the class with power more and more difficult to even

identify, let alone oppose. This makes the class struggle much more invisible. It is no wonder, then, that people more readily relate to their status equals e.g. their sex, their race, their ethnic group, or their occupational category, rather than the entire class of working people.

When we look at the statuses of male and female, it is obvious that, on all accounts, males have the higher status. While all humans hold many statuses within their lifetime, gender constitutes such an elemental status, its recognition begins so early, its socialization is so intense, and its imposition on all other components of human development and status achievement is so total that we could term gender a "key status." It should be noted that the status inequality of gender is so far from being "natural" that it must constantly be reaffirmed in social ways. Hence men are still expected to date and marry women who are shorter, thinner, younger, less educated, and who have a lower occupational status. This not only validates the status inequality in a visible way, but it also makes it easier for the man to assert his power within the domestic sphere.

Little boys learn very early on that they must not simply behave as boys, but, more importantly, *they must not behave as girls*.¹⁸ The unspoken but underlying message learned is that girls are not simply different, *they are inferior*. Radical feminists have been quite correct in noting that misogyny forms a cultural underpinning of all modern societies. This misogyny has existed for so long, is so deeply embedded in our belief systems, and has been internalized to such an extent that it exists in relatively autonomous form. Moreover, since this learned misogyny is often combined with the expectation that "maleness" equals dominance and aggression, the level of violence that is directed at women in our society should not be surprising.

The existence of misogyny also adds to our understanding of the link between women's inferior status and the intense homophobia, particularly against males, in our society. Homosexual men are perceived as acting like their status inferiors, and are therefore deemed "traitors" to men. These notions have been reinforced by traditional psychology and

psychiatry, which have generally deemed that which is masculine to be “normal” and that which is feminine to be “abnormal.”¹⁹

The status differential between men and women, of course, is rife with contradictions for males in our society. First, the main socializing agents of childhood, the mother and the teacher, are almost all female. Moreover, while we spend an entire childhood teaching boys not to be feminine, we simultaneously instruct them that at maturity they should love, mate, and spend a lifetime with these inferior creatures! Is it any wonder that most men enter into gender relationships with a totally confused set of expectations? That they can love and beat their women at the same time? That they are at times unable to distinguish domination from eroticism?

It is valid to assert that men as a category *do* wield a certain degree of power within capitalist systems: however, there is a major disjuncture between the supposed reality for men and the actual reality for most men. The reality is that most men hold very little societal power. In most of their daily lives, in their world of work, in their control over their world, most men are quite powerless. The only power most men have, which traditionally has been legally sanctioned, is the power over women as individuals; even here, however, there has been a major erosion over the last fifty years as a result of the decline in patriarchal authority in the family. It is little wonder, then, that many men will attempt to assert their dominance in the one sphere where it has been tolerated, and at times even encouraged.

It is commonly argued that men control the economic, political, and ideological spheres. However, it is more precise to argue that men as a group have greater access to the positions of power than do women. This is partially a result of their higher status. Very few working people will ever achieve ownership of the means of production; more may achieve occupational statuses that give greater amounts of power and influence.

In capitalist societies, access to these positions of power has been almost totally closed to women until recently. Put differently, we might say that the “access gates” to positions of

power within capitalism have been *more* open to men than to women, while the reality for *most* men is that, like most women, they will never have access to such structured positions of power. The fact that traditionally almost all of these positions have been filled by white males gives the appearance that it is gender and/or race itself that gives power.

Moreover, when men in power act, there is little evidence to support arguments such as MacKinnon's that "the liberal state coercively and authoritatively constitutes the social order in the interest of men as a gender."²⁰ For example, it would be difficult to prove that the North American Free Trade Agreement was passed for the benefit of men; on the other hand, there is ample evidence that most sectors of big business both supported and have benefited from it.

However, it must be said that, since most people holding structured positions of power have traditionally been males, it has been easier for men as a category to accept and reinforce gender inequality. People do act on the basis of their real material conditions, and indeed, for thousands of years it has been a "man's world." However, this is quite different from the notion that men in structured positions of power are acting primarily *on behalf of* or *for the benefit of* all males.

Moreover, the argument that gender is a status, and that men suffer both materially or psychologically from gender inequality, is in no way meant to excuse or tolerate sexist behavior in any form, nor to minimize the experience of females within a misogynist society. However, women who, over the ages, have been coerced into accepting the legitimacy of their inferior status could also be said to be supporting gender inequality.²¹ The point here is not to create a "blaming the victim" argument, but, rather, to note that all humans internalize social reality. Our social world does not exist simply "out there," but inside each of us. If we hope to eliminate gender inequality, we must understand how most of us are simultaneously victimized by and help sustain it. In the process, we also come to understand how only men and women together can eliminate it.

Future Directions

Left feminists have spent much time advocating an autonomous women's movement, and struggling around the question of unity in diversity. What is much less clear is exactly what this diverse and autonomous movement should be struggling *for*, aside from the generalized end of gender inequality or a utopian vision of a socialist future. Few clear strategies or tactics for change have been offered. In the end, left feminism has too often been reduced to appeals to non-misogynist rationality that leave it not far from the liberal tradition. In order to avoid being guilty of "prescriptivism," many authors are left in a metaphysical swamp of subjective experiences spontaneously giving rise to some unspecified set of actions that will somehow all come together and create something called "socialism."²²

Can we move beyond such abstract calls for unity in diversity? What should be the focus of left feminism in terms of directions for social change? At the moment, it is clear that global capital has begun a frontal attack on all the rights and benefits won by working people—men and women—in the last hundred years. Women, as an economically disadvantaged group, have been particularly hard-hit.

Advancing economic equality for women must be seen as a key strategy for raising women's inferior status. As Ehrenreich states, "the goal of financial independence for women, however 'elementary' in the sense of having broad feminist support, is more radical than it may once have appeared."²³ Its major effect is to break the economic dependence that most women, even those who work, have traditionally had on men. It not only begins to erode the division of labor in the workplace, but it helps break down such a division in the home as well.²⁴ It puts a brake on the degree of control that men can exert over women, including domestic violence, and helps lift many families out of a cycle of poverty. It is also an area around which most women, and indeed most men, can agree. Tied to this struggle in the

coming years will likely be the demand for a shorter work week.²⁵

A central question revolves around the state and in whose interests it acts. While Marxist theory argues that states act primarily in the interests of the class with economic power, the extent to which they are able to do so in an unfettered manner will depend on the level of class struggle. Governments in much of the capitalist world have now accepted the demands of global capital to attack social programs in the name of solving their supposed "debt crisis." Such cutbacks have a particularly deleterious effect on the lives of women. The struggle of working people to secure state funds is central to the struggle for gender equality. At the same time, the limits to social reform within capitalist systems must be acknowledged. For example, as Teeple points out:

In the industrial nations, women and children are the largest recipients of non-contributory social benefits; but other than to alleviate the worst effects of poverty, the welfare state has not affected their role or place in society. In fact, it both reflects and reinforces their subordinate and dependent positions.²⁶

Thus, it must be acknowledged that any demands for gender equality within the current arrangement of class relations can only meet with limited success. Full gender equality will never be possible in capitalist societies.

Of course, notwithstanding the above, the struggle of women to regain their place within society must continue to be fought within all spheres, and no area of public or private life can remain untouched. Moreover, while Marxist analysis sees the working class as central to any struggle for change, this is in no way meant to argue that all struggles must be subsumed within organized forms of the class. Women, despite their many differences, do have a particular set of interests and experiences that draw them together into their own collectivities. Such groups can potentially be a formidable force for social change. However, without class and a materialist analysis at the core of feminist struggles, women's groups will remain isolated and limited in their ability to achieve their ends, as the real structures of power remain untouched.²⁷

It is not that left feminists are currently unsympathetic to the variable of class. However, the attempt of many to distance themselves from the classical Marxist tradition, combined with a fear of "prescriptivism," has too often kept them from formulating concrete proposals for action. It is to be hoped that the increasing assault on ordinary working people around the world will push the left to move beyond individualistic and isolated struggles for emancipation to a broader collectivity that can weaken the power of capital. At the outset, this requires that the left, both activists and academics, move beyond the "retreat from class."

NOTES

1. H. Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Women and Revolution*, L. Sargent, ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1981), pp. 1-41.
2. See E. Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class* (London: Verso, 1986).
3. K.V. Hansen and I.J. Philipson, eds. *Women, Class, and the Feminist Imagination: A Socialist-Feminist Reader* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 12-13.
4. Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism," p. 2.
5. Charlotte Perkins Gilman Chapter of the New American Movement, "A View of Socialist Feminism," *Feminist Frameworks*, second ed., A. Jaggar, P. Rothenberg, eds. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), pp. 152-154.
6. D. Smith, *Feminism & Marxism — A Place to Begin A Way to Go* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1977), p. 51-52.
7. E. Wilson, with A. Weir, *Hidden Agendas* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986), pp. 105-8.
8. Wood, *The Retreat from Class*, pp. 1-2.
9. Ibid.
10. Wilson and Weir, *Hidden Agendas*, pp. 107-108.
11. See G. Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); P. Reeves Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
12. M. Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," *Monthly Review* 4, v. 21 (1969): 13-27.
13. B. Ehrenreich, "Life without Father: Reconsidering Socialist-Feminist Theory," *Socialist Review* 73 (1984): 53.
14. See J. Naiman, "The Long and Winding Road: Engels, Gender Equality, and Processes of Change," Paper presented at the Western Association for Sociology and Anthropology, Vancouver, B.C. Unpublished.
15. See C.A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
16. M. Kaufman "Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power," *Theorizing Masculinities*, H. Brod, M. Kaufman, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 142-163.

17. See P. Armstrong and H. Armstrong, *Theorizing Women's Work* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990).
18. D. S. David and R. Brannon, eds., *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976), p. 14.
19. M. Greenspan, "The Fear of Being Alone: Female Psychology and Women's Work," *Socialist Review* 73 (1984): 93-112; N. Weisstein, "Kinder, kirche, kuche: Psychology Constructs the Female," *Women in Sexist Society*, V. Gornick, B.K. Moran, eds. (New York: New American Library, 1970), pp. 207-224.
20. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, p. 162.
21. Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*.
22. C. Ramazanoglou, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 189-91; Hansen and Philipson, eds., *Women, Class, and the Feminist Imagination: A Socialist-Feminist Reader*, pp. 535-617.
23. B. Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), p. 176.
24. P. Blumstein and P. Schwartz, "Money and Ideology: Their Impact on Power and the Division of Household Labor," *Gender, Family, and Economy*, R. Lesser Blumberg, ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 261-288.
25. See B. O'Hara, *Working Harder Isn't Working* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1993).
26. See G. Teeple, *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform*. (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1995).
27. Wood, *The Retreat from Class*, p. 199.

"OF COURSE MURDER": ON A SORT OF HOMAGE TO KURT TUCHOLSKY

by JOHN ROSENTHAL

"For four years there were whole square-miles of land upon which murder was obligatory, whereas only half an hour away it was just as strongly prohibited. Did I say 'murder'? Of course murder. Soldiers are murderers." These words, written by the German satirist and poet Kurt Tucholsky, are today the object of a remarkable controversy in Germany: remarkable not only because the stake in the controversy is whether it will remain legal even just to repeat them in public or to disseminate texts containing them on German soil, but also because they were written in 1931, with reference, namely, to the First World War.

Already at that time, the publication of Tucholsky's words in the Berlin weekly *die Weltbühne* provided the occasion for legal proceedings. The Minister of the Reichswehr Wilhelm Groener detected in them an "insult" against his troops and a "defamation," and accordingly brought charges: not against Tucholsky—who, long wary of the dominant political tendency of the late Weimar period, by now made his residence in Sweden—but rather against the editor of the *Weltbühne*, Carl von Ossietzky. The trial took place in July 1932. The defense came prepared with numerous citations drawn from a wide range of sources, including Kant and Goethe—and even Frederick the Great and Hindenburg himself! Os-

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sietsky was acquitted.¹ Though this did not necessarily come as any great relief to him, since he was already serving an eighteen month prison term as a result of a previous conviction on charges of treason. (The latter had been brought against Ossietsky following the publication by the *Weltbühne* of allegedly “secret” information on the reconstruction of the German Luftwaffe—and any such information was at least in principle “secret,” since the reconstruction of the Luftwaffe was prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.) The public prosecutor’s subsequent appeal of Ossietsky’s acquittal was likewise rejected, the court finding that given the generality of the statement “Soldiers are murderers,” no particular person had been “insulted” by it.

After a pause of somewhat more than half a century, however, the prosecution resumed. In Ossietsky’s place in the dock, there appeared now a number of common German citizens of pacifistic inclinations who found in Tucholsky’s words an apt expression of their own sentiments. In a series of cases, dating from roughly the time of German reunification, individuals who had adopted the Tucholsky citation in various ways and in various contexts were found guilty of “insulting” members of the Bundeswehr and assessed fines. In one instance, the defendant had attached to his car a sticker displaying the phrase “Soldiers are Murderers.” For this act, a local court in Krefeld fined him DM 8400. In another instance, the defendant’s crime was to have raised a bedsheet in the vicinity of ongoing NATO exercises, on which he had written (in English) “A SOLDIER IS A MURDER.” (The defendant would claim in court that the ambiguity of the formulation was intentional.) In a third case, charges were brought against a “Herr S.,” who in a “letter-to-the-editor” had quoted the Tucholsky passage in full, defended its timeliness and repeated (though in quotation marks) the variation on “Soldiers are murderers” suggested by yet another defendant who had just been acquitted in a similar case: “All soldiers are potential murderers!”

Following several unsuccessful appeals, all these cases found themselves before Germany’s Constitutional Court,

which in two decisions in Fall 1994 and October of 1995 repealed the convictions and returned the cases to the lower courts, with the comment that the earlier findings "were based in part on considerations which . . . are not compatible with the basic right to freedom of opinion." The Court's majority further explained, in a manner reminiscent of the Ossietsky judgment, that it had not been sufficiently established in any of the cases that the statements in question referred specifically to the soldiers of the Bundeswehr—on which interpretation the right to the protection of personal honor or *Ehrenschutz* might indeed, in the Court's judgment, take precedence over that to freedom of opinion—and not "to, say, all the soldiers in the world," in the manner of generic anti-war statements.²

This brings us to the most recent developments. Apparently dissatisfied with the Constitutional Court's interpretation of the law, the ruling coalition of Chancellor Helmut Kohl has now undertaken to revise the latter by adding to the country's penal code a paragraph that would provide special "protection" to the Bundeswehr and its members. This initiative is especially curious, since the Court's decision did not in substance depend upon an interpretation of the law different from that of the local courts, but rather upon a different interpretation of *the relevant facts*: whether the various expressions constituted "insults" or not. Such a peculiar circumstance led the Social Democratic member of the Bundestag Walter Kolbow to observe in a recent parliamentary debate that: "What they want to make punishable already is punishable."³ But that is not quite right either. A careful reading of the text of the proposed emendation makes clear that the coalition intends precisely to *legislate* in favor of the lower courts' interpretation of the facts, making *even* a quite general statement like "Soldiers are murderers" punishable, since—or so the reasoning must be assumed to run—by implication it applies to the particular as well. According to the formulation put forward by the Minister of Justice Edzard Schmidt-Jortzig (himself, incidentally, a member of the ostensibly "liberal" Freie Demokratische Partei), the new paragraph 109b should run as follows:

Whoever, publicly in a gathering or through the dissemination of written materials, defames soldiers in relation to their service, in such a way as to damage the reputation of the Bundeswehr or its soldiers among the public, will be punished with up to three years imprisonment or a fine.⁴

Apart from the potential severity of the punishment recommended, what is notable in the proposed legislation is also the reference to the dissemination of written materials. In the highly probable event of its passage, what will happen to Tucholsky's own writings? Will sale of volumes containing the offending citation become illegal? What of the famous 1932 "picturebook," *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, which Tucholsky produced in collaboration with the artist John Heartfield and that contains, among other things, a photo-montage of various Reichswehr generals above the caption: "Animals Looking at You?" (Tucholsky would later insist that both montage and caption were Heartfield's work, remarking, rather ambiguously, that "The insult of the animals is not to my taste.")⁵ Will the Rowohlt Verlag, publishers of Tucholsky's collected works, be made liable? What will happen, for that matter, to Gerhard Zwerenz's recent book of reflections on the role of the Second World War in the public consciousness of the *Bundesrepublik*. The latter not only stands in the tradition of Tucholsky by virtue of both conviction and content, but also borrows from him its title "*Soldiers are Murderers?*"⁶

In any event, proof that the legislation is meant to be taken quite seriously is already at hand. On March 5, just four days after the drafting of the proposed law, the editorial offices of two Berlin dailies, the *Junge Welt* and the *Tageszeitung*, were searched by the police on the order of the public prosecutor's office. The latter explained that the two papers were under suspicion of having "insulted the Bundeswehr." The stated grounds for this "suspicion" was an advertisement that had been carried in each of the papers for the "Campaign Against Compulsory Service and the Military" (whose offices were likewise searched) and that opened with the line "Yes, Murders."⁷ As the *Junge Welt* has provided consistently critical reporting on the, so to speak, "reactivation" of the German military over the last several years—for example, on German

participation in military operations in the Balkans—one can only wonder if an indictment is imminent. (The same concerns are not so pressing with regards to the "*Taz*," which despite its "radical" pretensions, is politically a highly ambiguous paper. Indeed, it can even be said to have helped prepare the way for German military intervention abroad through exceptionally partisan reporting on the Yugoslav crisis, which—much in the manner of the righteous simplifications popularized by a Bernard-Henri Lévy or an Alain Finkielkraut in France—amounted to little more than war agitation. But that is another story.)

It is indicative of the generally sorry state of reporting on German developments in this country, that none of the events narrated here have received the least attention in the U.S. mainstream media. The *New York Times* has, for instance, in recent months seen "fit" to carry a story on German celebrants of Native American culture and a profile of Germany's leading pornographer on the occasion of the opening of an "erotica museum" in Berlin. (The latter article mentions that its admirable subject enlisted in the *Luftwaffe* during the Second World War and "became the first woman allowed to fly German war planes"—a fact that the *Times* reporter blandly presents as evidence of her "pioneer spirit.") Such quaint topics are evidently deemed to be newsworthy by the *Times*'s editors, while a very public legislative initiative in which the most basic of civil liberties (*including* potentially the freedom of the press) hang in the balance, evidently is not. Indeed, it is not even deemed worthy of a "news-brief." A report on the initiative to ban Tucholsky's phrase went out on Reuters on March 1 and was carried, for instance, in the *Financial Times* of the following day. It did not appear in the *New York Times*. By contrast, the *New York Times* edition of April 13 includes a Reuters-fed "brief" on the conversion of "Auerbach's," a Leipzig *Bierkeller* made famous by Goethe's *Faust*, into a luxury restaurant.

Incidentally, some months after his acquittal in the first "Soldiers are Murderers" trial, Carl von Ossietzky was released from prison as the result of an amnesty. In Febru-

ary 1933, however, following the appointment of Hitler as chancellor and the Reichstag fire, he was arrested yet again and this time imprisoned in the concentration camp at Papenburg-Esterwegen. He there contracted tuberculosis and died in May 1938, still a prisoner of the Nazi state. As for Kurt Tucholsky, he was denounced as a "traitor against the nation" and stripped of his German citizenship in a flamboyant "Ausbürgerung" action undertaken by the Nazis in August 1933. His books were be banned and burnt. Following the second incarceration of Ossietzky and with the consolidation of Nazi power in Germany, Tucholsky grew increasingly apathetic. In a letter of December 15, 1934 to his friend Walter Hasenclever, Tucholsky attempted to explain his attitude. "What has distanced me from these matters," he wrote, "... is not this or that political detail. It is something else. The world for which we have worked and to which we belong, has ceased to exist."⁸ On December 21, 1935, at the age of forty-five, Kurt Tucholsky died in Göteborg Sweden, apparently having taken his own life.

NOTES

1. For further details of the trial, see Michael Hepp, Kurt Tucholsky: Biographische Annäherungen (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993), pp. 333-334.
2. Cf. "Verlautbarung der Pressestelle des Bundesverfassungsgerichts" 46/95 I.; and for more details, cf. the full text of the court's decision (in cases 1BvR 1476/91, 1BvR 1980/91, 1BvR 102/92, and 1BvR 221/92) under the title *Zum Verhältnis von Meinungsfreiheit und Ehreenschutz bei Kollektivurteilen über Soldaten*.
3. "Streit über Schutz für Soldaten," *Die Welt*, 9 March 1996.
4. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 March 1996.
5. Hepp, *Kurt Tucholsky*, p. 317.
6. Cf. Gerhard Zwerenz, *"Soldaten sind Mörder": die Deutschen und der Krieg* (München: Knesebeck & Schuler, 1988). In light of the chronology, Zwerenz's book was in all likelihood the proximate inspiration for the small wave of Tucholsky citations that swept across the FRG in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Zwerenz is incidentally, presently a member of the parliamentary group of the PDS (Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus) in the Bundestag.
7. Cf. "Beleidigung? Durchsuchung bei Tageszeitungen," *Die Welt*, 6 March 1996.
8. Cf. Mary Tucholsky and Friedrich Lambart, eds., *Kurt Tucholsky und Deutschlands Marsch ins Dritte Reich* (Berlin: Verlag Hentrich, 1983), p. 85.

Roses Strewn in the Path (1931)

by Kurt Tucholsky

You have to treat them sweet and nice,
frighten them not—they are so soft!
 You must with palm leaves go around them,
 mindful of their specialness!
 If your dog barks, then pull his leash—:
 Kiss the Fascists wherever you meet.

If in their meetings they incite,
say: "Yes and Amen—with greatest pleasure!
Here you have me—smash me to bits!"
And should they beat, then praise their effort.
 For it is, after all, just their business to beat!
 Kiss the Fascists wherever you meet.

And if they shoot—oh for love of God,
do you really value so much this life?
That's just a pacifistic-fad!
Why not be a sacrifice?
 Call them: the sweet little lambies,
 give them bonbons and candies . . .
And if you should feel
right in your gut
 the Hitler-dagger, cold and deep—:
 Kiss the Fascists, Kiss the Fascists,
 Kiss the Fascists, wherever you meet—!

Translation by John Rosenthal

THE AGONY OF NEO-LIBERALISM OR THE END OF CIVILIZATION?

by BORIS KAGARLITSKY

The defeat of neo-liberalism is no longer a question for debate. The triumph of neo-liberalism never occurred, the economic model of the free market is disintegrating before our eyes, and in the countries of Eastern Europe the words and expressions comprising the liberal lexicon have taken on the force of obscenities.

It would seem that the time for alternatives has now come. But where are these alternatives?

When the U.S. philosopher Francis Fukuyama declared that with the triumph of neo-liberalism the end of history had arrived, people first argued with him, then began laughing at him, and finally forgot about him. This, however, was a mistake. When Fukuyama declared the end of history, he did not by any means base his thesis on the economic or social successes of capitalism. In practice, he measured the success of the victorious ideology by a single criterion: the ability of the world ruling class to destroy, suffocate, corrupt, or discredit any constructive alternative to itself. If there were no alternatives to capitalism, everything would stay the same whether capitalism was good or bad.

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In this sense, we are now even closer to the end of history than in 1989.

The economic failure of neo-liberalism has not led and will not lead automatically to the collapse of its ideological hegemony. The elites of modern-day capitalism cannot resolve the system's objective contradictions, and cannot and do not want to solve its growing problems, but they are capable of paralyzing any attempts to solve these problems.

Technological development is not paralyzed by social structures that are clearly outdated and increasingly absurd. This development continues; the only difference is that it ceases to improve people's lives. Indeed, technological development becomes a negative factor. With every turn in the spiral of technological revolution, more and more new contradictions and disproportions accumulate. Relationships become confused, the structures and systems of rule grow steadily more complex, and the processes become less and less predictable.

The "repressive tolerance" of the 1960s has been replaced by repressive or coercive hegemony. The official ideologies no longer convince anyone, but this scarcely troubles the authorities, since they do not allow alternative ideologies to be propagated. Or else, such ideologies are disseminated in fragmentary form, and in this way simply demonstrate their inadequacy as genuine alternatives.

The new information technologies, which in theory have the potential to undermine the dominance of a mass media that is monopolized by the elites, themselves retain an elitist character. Even the "massive" spread of computers has not made them available to the slum-dwellers of Rio de Janeiro or the miners of Prokopyevsk in Central Siberia. In short, the new technologies serve not only to unite people, but also to divide them.

Paraphrasing Lenin, one could say that despite the obvious crisis, those on top do not want change, and those underneath cannot achieve it.

The lack of a revolutionary perspective has led to a profound crisis of reformism. Nowhere have the forces of the

left been prepared for the new situation. Moreover, the left is itself undergoing a deep moral crisis. Instead of an indispensable reevaluation of values following the events of 1989, there has been massive ideological desertion. Serious discussion on how to interpret the traditions and values of the workers' movement in contemporary circumstances has been replaced by agitated chatter about what should replace these values.

The traditional program of the left is not only a real alternative, but quite simply the only alternative. The system now is in such a tangle that the only way to deal with its Gordian knot of contradictions is to slice through it. Partial reforms and gradual improvements are becoming possible only as the result of radical shifts in the whole structure of society and the economy. Without a broad nationalization of private capital ("the expropriation of the expropriators"), without overcoming the "free market," it is impossible to carry out even a minimal reform of the health care system or to improve social welfare.

Most left parties, however, are not afraid of anything so much as of their own traditions. Instead of discussing what nationalization means today, they are wasting their time trying to prove to the ruling elites that there will not be any nationalizations. The ruling classes, meanwhile, have less than complete trust in these promises, and prefer not to allow leftists to gain access to the levers of real power unless these leftists have proven their complete political impotence.

The lack of alternatives is leading to the erosion of all forms of representative democracy. But in this case the crisis of democracy, unlike the case in Europe in the 1920s or in Latin America during the 1970s, is not leading to the rapid collapse of democratic institutions. Instead, these institutions are slowly degenerating and dying out. They are increasingly by-passed not only by economic decision-making, but even by the political process itself.

The rebirth of fascism in Europe is an important symptom of the crisis. But what is involved is not just the rise of extreme right-wing organizations. The organizations of the political establishment itself are increasingly becoming infected with authoritarian populism. And this is only natural

in circumstances where trust in the institutions of representative democracy has been undermined.

A crisis without an alternative is a sign of imminent shocks. In this sense the catastrophe in Rwanda provides humanity with a warning. The West should not comfort itself with the hope that the hunger, bloodshed, and economic collapse on the periphery will not touch the centre.

The fall of the civilizations of antiquity also began with collapse on the periphery. In this respect, the past has a terrible lesson to teach us. The “end of history” is not a foolish joke by a person who has read too much Hegel but a real possibility. Of course, what is at stake is only our own history and our own society. Humanity as a biological species has survived the fall of a series of civilizations. It will also survive the collapse of the “global” bourgeois civilization of our time.

Nevertheless, there is a basis for optimism in the often-demonstrated ability of various societies to find a solution even when organized political forces, traditional institutions, and generally recognized elites have shown their total bankruptcy. In such a situation the spontaneous resolution of contradictions “from below” is accompanied by the collapse of all these institutions and elites. What this signifies is shocks on no less a scale than during the ill-fated epoch from 1914 to 1945.

Twenty years ago not even the most hardened pessimist could have imagined an “optimistic” scenario such as this. But it is precisely this scenario that represents the global-historical result of the “success” of neo-liberal reforms. It seems that for the majority of the earth’s population, social cataclysms are the only hope left for the future.

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BOOKS

"Accumulate, Accumulate! That is Moses and the Prophets!"

reviewed by Arthur DiQuattro

Peter G. Peterson, *Facing Up! How to Rescue the Economy from Crushing Debt and Restore the American Dream*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993. 411pp \$21.50 cloth; \$14.00 paper.

Peter Peterson is chairman of the Blackstone Group, a New York investment bank, formerly Secretary of Commerce under Nixon, and CEO of Bell & Howell and Lehman Brothers. He is also a life-long Republican who "during the Reagan-Bush years . . . felt increasingly like a Republican abandoned by his party." His estrangement has been exacerbated by the recent ascendancy of right-wing radicalism in the House of Representatives. Peterson gives theoretical expression to the interests of big transnational capital, and even though he shares some of the ideas of the Contract on America, he advances distinct strategies for addressing the federal debt, national savings, and stagnating investment. The fact that the Contract is the creature of a House literally dominated by members with small business backgrounds (as a result of the November 1994 elections, for the first time in forty-two years, they outnumber lawyers)¹ no doubt accounts for Peterson's blue-chip antipathy towards its parochialism, knee-jerk anti-government rhetoric, supply-side mantras, and so on. But insofar as there are divisions within

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big capital itself, Peterson represents the moderate wing that opposes the radical wing. Thus the political import of his book and the program of his Concord Coalition, a “non-partisan grass-roots [sic!] group devoted to telling the U.S. people the truth about the budget deficit and other pressing national economic problems.” So what does temperate, level-headed capital have in store for the working class during this historical phase?²

Peterson’s focal point is that the U.S. economy is not productive enough because of a shortfall in savings that results in less investment, handicapping the United States in an accumulation race with its competitors. The shortfall is caused by prodigal government spending, especially entitlements that benefit middle-income working people. In other words, the federal debt and government consumption-oriented policies “crowd out” investment from private capital markets. The task is to shift from a consumption-based to a savings-and-investment-based economy, and the solution lies mainly in balancing the federal budget, by cutting spending more than raising taxes. Tax cuts, à la supply-side voodoo, are out. Peterson and his team of economists estimate that a balanced budget by the year 2000 will free 4.5 percent of GDP for private investment and, when coupled with increased public spending on productive resources (infrastructure, R&D) and “renewed private thrift,” will add about 7 percent of GDP to the savings and investment pool. The following components highlight Peterson’s program:

(1) modestly *cutting* defense spending, restructuring the military (downsizing, integration of the branches, emphasis on regional and mobile deployment), and formalizing channels of communication among business leaders, politicians, and national security officials. (Peterson has chaired the Council on Foreign Relations and he “has learned much from discussions with the senior staff of Business Executives for National Security”); (2) substantially *cutting* entitlements—Social Security, Medicare, federal pensions, unemployment compensation, farm subsidies, etc., by imposing an affluence test, so that families with incomes below the median would be largely unaffected; (3) *cutting* tax deductions on home mortgages; (4) *capping* the tax exclusion for employer-paid health care, *raising* Medicare premiums, *rationing* health care in Medicare and Medicaid through caps on costs and stipends to recipients, but *extending* health insurance to the uninsured; (5) *raising* top marginal income-tax rates; (6) *introducing* a national 5 percent consumption tax (different from a sales tax, because the consumption tax can be progressive with rates increasing steeply going up the income ladder) and *raising* gasoline and “sin” taxes; (7) taxing most federal

benefits, especially pensions; (8) *increasing* income assistance for the working poor and, generally, not trashing or demonizing the marginalized poor; (9) *increasing* government spending on public investment (R&D, physical and human capital) by 1 percent of GDP.

Peterson calculates a bottom-line reduction of \$3,750-\$5,000 in the annual income of the average household, justifying his "budget action plan" on ethical and efficiency grounds. There is the trite appeal to intergenerational justice—the national debt is "fiscal child abuse." Also running through his economic analysis is the idea that there is something ethically amiss in whatever redistribution of income results from the government's provision of entitlements.

Peterson works with an unelaborated and undefended assumption that capitalist markets reward people according to effort and productive contribution—that market distribution is a good measure of distributive justice—and that public provision of goods enables people to get more than what they "put in" to the public store. This is tied to an efficiency argument that government entitlements encourage greater consumption than if people had to individually bear the costs of what they consume. In other words, public goods make it rational for individuals to consume excessively, with the collectively irrational consequence that everyone is worse off. Excessive demand presses supply, ups costs, and brings about inevitable funding crises. Not surprisingly, Peterson seldom applies this "tragedy of the commons" type of analysis to the private sector, to capitalist markets. For example, he wants to maintain the private medical insurance system (within the context of price and bureaucratic rationing) even though the evidence is in that single-payer systems such as Canada's are more efficient than that of the United States ("America is a nation shaped by free-market traditions and distrust of government bureaucracy . . . Americans will never be comfortable with systematic government micromanagement of our health care system.") On this score, I think it would be telling to examine the investment portfolio of the Blackstone Group.

By far, Peterson's most important efficiency argument—it is the theme of the book—is that there is a "capital shortage" due to the national debt, and that this goes back at least twenty-five years. Why does Peterson think this the case? This is a hard question, whose formulation and answer involve (a) statistics, (b) disputed methods of determining them, and (c) conflicting theoretical assumptions about how capitalist economies work. To investigate Peterson's mistake, let's consider these three aspects of the problem in light of savings, the deficits, and investment, never forgetting that (a)-(c) have a tight fit.

How do we measure savings to ascertain whether there is a shortfall given investment requirements? In an article published in *Monthly Review* more than a decade ago, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff show that there was actually an *increase* in private sector savings, as a percentage of GDP, during the period (1965-1979) that Peterson claims experienced a *decrease*.³ Both Sweezy/Magdoff and Peterson look at similar “official” sources for their data, but they decide differently on what to include and on how to interpret the data they admit for analysis. For example, Sweezy/Magdoff, paying attention to an array of such sources, include the savings and capital gains of households, as well as the savings in corporated and unincorporated businesses, counting undistributed profits and depreciation reserves. (Why count depreciation reserves? Because they are frequently invested in more productive, enlarged capacity, not for “pure” replacement; and they are used in troubled industries to branch out into other fields.) Peterson excludes several of these categories, limiting himself to the selective data of the cook books of the U.S. Department of Commerce that set off the “capital shortage” alarms installed by the supply-siders back in the Reagan era.

How do we measure the annual national deficits? Robert Heilbroner and Peter Bernstein calculate the national deficit at a mere \$3 billion in 1988, a figure justified by the reasonable criteria they use: net as opposed to gross deficit; adjustment of the federal deficit by state and local surpluses, the latter made possible in part by federal grants in aid; inflation adjustment; and, very importantly, counting a significant part of government expenditures as productive investment.⁴ They ask: why do official accounting procedures apply public capital expenditures against current income in the year they are made, instead of being charged off over the life of capital goods—infrastructural things like roads, bridges, buildings, education, R&D, etc.—in the way this is done in the private sector? Heilbroner and Bernstein conclude that the deficits are considerably smaller than Peterson would have us believe.

They also wonder about what is behind the recurrent alarmist campaigns that foster suspect beliefs, and this brings me to my final points about investment and controversial theoretical assumptions. They write: “The crowding-out argument leads inescapably to the conclusion that public investment has no intrinsic legitimacy.” This is not quite right, I think. It applies to the House radicals but to Peterson only with qualification. Peterson, after all, wants to increase public investment with funds made available by a reduction in government spending on consumption programs. True enough

that for him “by far and away the lion’s share of all our new investments” should be private, but spending an extra 1 percent of GDP (an estimated \$101 billion in 2004) on public investment is not insignificant and shows that for Peterson the private sector is deficient in supplying adequate infrastructural investment. If Peterson is wrong about savings and the debt, he is right about the fact of slowdown in private investment. But how do we theoretically explain the fact? Sweezy/Magdoff provide the explanation: excess capacity, especially in manufacturing. I won’t cite all the data: it suffices to say that from 1980-1987 capacity utilization was only 80 percent, barely rising above that level through 1990; and unemployment averaged 6.8 percent during the boom years 1983-1989. So there was plenty of labor and capacity available during that period when the supply-siders were ballyhooing “capital shortages” and pressing for taxing and spending policies designed to increase the income and savings of the rich. Income available for savings increased alright, but that did not boost productive investment, thus the justified worry about retarded investment which, as Sweezy/Magdoff explain, examining data going back to the 1970s, is a secular tendency in advanced (oligopolistic) capitalist economies. Productive investment stagnates in the face of reduced profit opportunities in those parts of the economy in which there is excess capacity. In other words, it is a lack of investment opportunities and not “capital shortages” or “savings crises” that present the problem of slack investment.

In the classic case of the Great Depression of 1929-1939, the real world of capitalist economies violated Say’s Law, then an integral part of vulgar neoclassical theory, according to which supply “must” equal demand, or, more particularly, savings “must” equal investment.⁵ At that time, there were no capital shortages and interest rates were negligible. There was, however, a lack of profitable investment opportunities and so, as Keynes understood, savings never got translated into investment and the economy stagnated as part of its normal course of operation. It was only exogenous forces, mainly defense expenditures, that interrupted this course. Peterson, saddled by his theories (he studied economics at the University of Chicago) can’t see it this way: the depression of the 1930s was caused by “policy-induced maladies, such as tariff mania and monetary contraction.” Peterson cannot theoretically accommodate the fact of secular stagnation in modern capitalism, thinking that slackening investment “must” be the result of insufficient savings caused by government policy. For Sweezy/Magdoff, however, there remains the problem of arrested investment due to excess capacity wide-

spread throughout the economy, especially in the manufacturing sector. Sweezy/Magdoff's analysis yields policy recommendations radically at odds with those of Peterson:

The truth is that a shift from consumption to saving would be self-defeating, since it would shrink the market for the production of investment goods (assuming that the savings would be used for additional investment) These days a genuine renewal of growth could be based only on a proper proportionate expansion of the demand for both consumer and producer goods [including a substantial increase in demand from the public sector]. . . . This in turn could happen only with a decisive redistribution of income from the rich to the middle- and lower-income groups. But the obstacle to such a development is that the lopsidedness of income distribution is due to the structure of ownership of the means of production. As Marx wrote over a hundred years ago, *the real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself*.⁶

NOTES

1. See "Taking Care of Business," *U.S. News and World Report* (27 March 1995): 42-45.
2. A condensed version of Peterson's ideas appears in his "How To Eliminate the Deficit!" *New York Review of Books*, 7 February 1994. Liberal capitalists (e.g. Felix Rohatyn, who has recently jumped on the balanced-budget bandwagon) and like-minded academic economists regularly publish in *NYRB*.
3. Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, "Are Low Savings Ruining the Economy?" *Monthly Review* 7, v. 31 (December 1980): 1-12.
4. Robert Heilbroner and Peter Bernstein, *The Debt and the Deficit: False Alarms/Real Possibilities* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989).
5. Say's Law "assumes that the capitalist system always tends to produce an equality of supply and demand at full employment." Howard Sherman, *The Business Cycle: Growth and Crisis under Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1991), p. 52. Sherman provides an excellent account of the dominance in economic theory of Say's Law up to the 1930s, its retreat in the face of Keynesian criticism, and its dismal return since the mid-1970s.
6. Sweezy and Magdoff, "Are Low Savings Ruining the Economy?" p. 12.

Revolutionary Folktales

reviewed by Jack Weston

Eduardo Galeano, *Walking Words*, with woodcuts by Jose Francisco Borges. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995. 288 pp. \$23.00 cloth.

After several years we have a new book in English by a major American writer, who, to the world's rare good fortune, is on our side. As in all his books after his first, *Open Veins of Latin America* (Monthly Review Press, 1971), Galeano uses his characteristic form of short narratives, vignettes, and insights arranged to create meaningful parts, continuities, and cross references.

Readers will enjoy the book—Galeano's gregarious love of life and people makes us laugh and cry and feel good. His bold and fresh invention, his creative narrative strategies, and his means of making every word count surprise and delight us. His brilliant perceptions, expressed in witty twists and pithy questions about being, memory, speech, praxis, history, desire, even spirit and the sacred, make us think again and search beyond our old horizons.

As in his recent *The Book of Embraces*, illustrations coordinate with text throughout. That book was illustrated with his own photomontage of old engravings, while *Walking Words* includes the prints of Jose Francisco Borges, a remarkable Brazilian woodcut artist. Galeano pointedly declares the book to be a "joint project" with the artist, who working in the old "cordel" traditions, created illustrated

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stories, printed them himself, and signed and sold them in the marketplace.

Galeano obviously wants this book to be a modification and extension of that tradition, to express the world, lives, and consciousness of the ordinary, forgotten people of Latin America. These are not pre-Columbian stories of indigenous people, like those he retold for the first page of *Memories of Fire*, but stories of all the people to our south, natives and European mixed, who have to work or scrounge or steal to survive. They have the features of folk tales (the cosmic vision; the didactic moral; the explanation of origins; spirits; material objects and living creatures speaking and relating to humans; transformations; magic; repeating, expanding series) but they include all kinds of people of all time periods right up to the present one with its automobiles, radios, pollution, and urban shanty towns. Except for a few big cities, the towns and countries in diverse geographies all have invented, often comic, names. His characters' names are not historic or generally known and have wide ethnic associations.

This is the most purely inventive of Galeano's books because it is so free of history, in the sense that it does not refer to events that happened or vital statistics. His words here express the generalized experience of a people—their dreams and hopes and feelings and memories. I was at first puzzled that this most political of all great storytellers, whose every pages burns with hate for the real, named oppressors and embraces with love the often foolish, sometimes heroic resisters, should now write stories without identifying his or her heroes and villains in plots that often are not even metaphors for class struggle.

I understand now that Galeano's strategy here is even more revolutionary and radical than all his other more overtly political books. His ambition is breathtaking and its success probably impossible. But we admire his heroic reach. Galeano wants his "walking words" and Borges's woodcuts to offer the mental world of a conflicted and divided people so that they can find and create their identity in it. The self-created identity gives hope and leads to united struggle for a society that develops the potentials of a now conscious and unified people.

Galeano is reaching out to what Frantz Fanon called "the zone of occult instability where the people dwell" (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1991 ed., p. 52): "occult" because our dominant culture ignores, hides, or lies about the zone; unstable because the people dwelling in it are still in the process of finding their identity, recognizing their history, their oppressors, their comrades—a process the book aids.

Galeano has long been convinced of the revolutionary power of words and pictures to awaken identity and hope in a united struggle. Identity becomes history in struggle, but is awakened in consciousness by words and art. Almost twenty years ago he wrote that "the writer can help others to become aware of who they are . . . of collective identity" and of "the importance of literature and its . . . revolutionary role in the exploration, revelation, and diffusion of our real and potential identity." (*Days and Nights*, Monthly Review Press, 1983, pp. 185-86, 189) The living myths of the Indians of Guatemala teach them "that they are human beings and that they have a longer history than the society that uses and despises them." In opposition to the dominant culture which "*distributes* ignorance, another insurgent culture *unchains* the capacity for understanding and creativity of the vast majority condemned to silence." From this submerged culture come "symbols of collective identity capable of opening . . . new spheres of participation, communication, and encounter." Literature can develop "the collective identity" or can rescue "the memory of the community that generates it." (*We Say No*, 1992, pp. 157-58, 168-69)

Galeano's walking words and Borges's pictures can help build "civil society," the "self-generated community power and solidarity, the space independent of the government," of which Subcomandante Marcos often speaks. (*Shadows of Tender Fury*, Monthly Review Press, 1995, p. 161) Civil society is strong in Mexico and most recently helped rescue the Zapatistas from PRI destruction, but it exists in various degrees of development everywhere in Latin America. This book is a revolutionary intervention in its favor.

William Appleman Williams: Public Historian

reviewed by Michael Meeropol

Paul M. Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, *William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of Empire*. New York, Routledge, 1995. 318 pp. \$18.95 paper.

In August of 1952, *MR* published an article by William Appleman Williams, a History Professor at the University of Oregon, entitled "Second Look at Mr. X." It forcefully challenged the thesis put forward by U.S. diplomat George Kennan (using the pseudonym "X") in *Foreign Affairs* that the United States needed to "contain" the Soviet Union. Such an article in *Monthly Review*, a socialist journal that had refused to side with the West in the Cold War, would not have surprised readers, but the author might have. Here was no son of an immigrant proletarian, no graduate of a worker's school. Instead, the author was a small-town midwesterner who could trace his family on both sides back to the American Revolution. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy and a decorated Second World War veteran, he had earned his Masters and PhD. in History at that center of early twentieth century Progressivism, the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

The article on Mr. X was actually the last chapter of a full-length monograph, *American-Russian Relations, 1787-1947*. The publisher had submitted the chapter to *Foreign Affairs*. Not surprisingly, the magazine rejected it as too sharp a criticism, and so *Monthly Review* got to publish it.¹

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This incident is one of many fascinating nuggets of information available in the book under review. For those of us who knew Bill Williams as a teacher, colleague, friend, or public figure, this book is guaranteed to fill in many gaps in our knowledge of one of the intellectual giants of the United States, post 1950.² For those who have not yet been exposed to his scholarship, especially the pathbreaking *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and the *Contours of American History*, this book provides an excellent introduction to these and all his other major works. It is written with tremendous care by admiring yet critical scholars, Paul Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, who used interviews, autobiographical writings, and the great corpus of serious intellectual work created by its subject (the bibliography has 112 separate entries of Williams's writings, the footnotes cover 42 pages) to produce a balanced, well-rounded analysis of Williams's intellectual contributions and political impact. There are also very useful analyses of the context in which Williams went to graduate school and began his career, particularly the impact of the Cold War and McCarthyism on the study of history after the Second World War, as well as the response of the mainstream historians' establishment to the challenges posed by Williams and other dissident critics of the 1960s and later.

Bill Williams was not just a serious scholar who helped an entire generation conceptualize the specific character of U.S. imperialism and who challenged the history profession with a creative interpretation of the entire sweep of U.S. history. He was also, as the authors stress in a very valuable early chapter, a "public intellectual." Beginning in the 1950s, he not only researched, thought, and published in his field of diplomatic history and U.S. expansionist thought, he wrote for the public at large, particularly in *The Nation* but also in *MR*, attacking the Cold War intellectual monolith that dominated "acceptable" debate. As a professor without tenure such out front dissent was clearly an act of courage, which earned him the enmity of certain establishment types in the history profession.³

But it was with *Tragedy* (1959) and *Contours* (1961) that he really stirred the hornets. In the first book he argued that despite its rejection of European style colonialism, the United States created an international empire by pressing for the "Open Door," not merely in China, which was the subject of Secretary of State John Hay's "Open Door Notes" in 1899-1900, but in the entire world.

Williams conceptualized these particular documents as the "basic formulation" of a general outlook leading to "a vast network of internal relations" that, taken together, integrated "economic theory and practice, abstract ideas, past and future politics, anticipations of Utopia, messianic idealism,

social-psychological imperatives, historical consciousness, and military strategy." Guiding both "elitist and popular thinking (and responses)," the Open Door finally became "an ideology (even theology) and ultimately a reification of reality." p. 92

Williams's prodigious archival research turned up reference after reference by U.S. political, business, and intellectual leaders to the absolute necessity for the success of U.S. democracy and/or the U.S. economy to be sustained by expansion. Beginning with Manifest destiny, as the United States confronted a vast continent settled by indigenous people with parts claimed by European powers, continuing with the interest in the Pacific that led to interventions in the Philippines and China, and culminating in serious concern about revolutionary upheavals in Mexico and then Russia, the need to expand was constant. In discovering this "tragic flaw" not only in U.S. foreign policy-making but in U.S. society in general, Williams challenged the heroes of the liberal establishment and of the Old Left.

Thomas Jefferson, the Abolitionists, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, the Populists, Woodrow Wilson, the labor movement, and especially Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal all were identified as playing major roles in the U.S. policy of expansionism. In opposition to this seemingly inevitable historical thrust, Williams found unlikely heroes. John Quincy Adams had at one point in his career argued that the United States had expanded enough and ought to be content with less than the entire continent. William E. Borah, known as one of the "isolationist" Senators who defeated Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations was identified by Williams as clearheaded conservative critic of imperialism. But Williams reserved his most quixotic praise for the man both liberals and radicals were brought up to hate in the 1940s and 1950s, Herbert C. Hoover. According to Williams's analysis, expressed most forcefully in *Contours* but developed as well in *Tragedy*, Hoover was a man who saw very clearly the difficulties of adjusting U.S. society to the presence of large corporate entities dominating the political economy in the early twentieth century.⁴ He also saw very clearly the danger of an expansionist impulse that saw the activities of other nations as potential threats to U.S. well-being whenever they seemed to be closing off a sector of the world to potential expansion. Thus, Williams thought Hoover's unwillingness to treat Japan's 1931 expansion into Manchuria as a *causus belli* indicated a desire to consider alternatives to expansionism as a source of domestic prosperity.⁵ Needless to say, choosing Adams, Borah, and Hoover as heroes made Williams a peculiar individual on the U.S. left.

Yet his method of presentation and his skillful blending of economic reality with political, cultural, and even religious rhetoric made his analysis of U.S. expansionism immediate to a younger generation estranged from "foreign sounding" ideologies that emphasized class struggle, the export of capital, the specifically Leninist conception of imperialism. Even individuals brought up conversant with Old Left modes of analysis often found Williams's formulations easier to understand and much easier to communicate to their nonradical friends and acquaintances.

Thus protestations that the United States was merely protecting the world from "godless communism" could be easily refuted by reference to the anti-revolutionary activity of the Wilson Administration in Mexico. Even more significant to many readers was Williams's emphasis that U.S. leaders were virtually unanimous in their belief after the Second World War that the United States had an overwhelming military and economic advantage over our erstwhile ally the Soviet Union, and that seen from the "other side" our insistence on the "open door in Eastern Europe was the truly expansionist activity." Turning Kennan on his head, Williams produced enough evidence and analysis to suggest that it was Soviet policy in Eastern Europe that was "containing" U.S. expansion rather than vice versa. Buhle and Rice-Maximin drive home the importance of Williams's work for the 1960s anti-war movement with this telling observation:

Orators against the Vietnam War on campus and in the community . . . crammed the *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* before mounting the stage and calling for the nation to consult its sleeping conscience . . . Vietnam proved him right, and showed [cold-war liberals] by contrast to be hypocritical and self-serving or (at a generous estimate) simply dead wrong. p. 146

If *Tragedy* was the work that most influenced the public consciousness, *Contours* provided food for thought for generations of students of U.S. history and society. Buhle and Rice-Maximin's discussion of that work alone is worth the price of their book. This will be valuable for those of us who last read *Contours* too many years ago and will be especially valuable for those reading it for the first time. In discussing that work, Buhle and Rice-Maximin hit upon another of Williams's great strengths as a "public historian."

Placing individuals within an all-encompassing and increasingly destructive system, Williams nevertheless treated them with personal sympathy . . . Once again as in *Tragedy*, students and others could read Williams as a "pro-American," a radical who saw great potential and good in his society even when he viewed the outcome of their actions with distress. p. 126

But there is much more to Williams's remarkable life and career than these two outstanding books. Some of his graduate students and others influenced by him played a major role in founding and developing the journal *Studies on the Left* and then went on to make major contributions to our understanding of U.S. foreign and domestic policy. The rise of an influential school known as "Cold War Revisionism" of which *Tragedy* was a seminal work was so frightening to the political and intellectual establishment that Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. published an article in *Foreign Affairs* seeking to "blow the whistle" on such dangerous trends.⁶ In 1973, Princeton University Press published James Maddox's scurrilous attack on Williams and six other historians writing in the tradition that saw U.S. expansionism and hostility to Soviet (and other) national interests as the primary cause of the Cold War. Buhle and Rice-Maximin detail the response of Williams and the history profession.⁷

And that's not all. Details of Williams's "baptism of fire" as a radical in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1946 are presented. In a letter to this reviewer in 1986, Williams remarked that he really learned about the power and purposes of institutions (the Catholic Church, the Navy, the racist establishment) while participating in the struggle for integration in that town. Two years after leaving Corpus Christi, he used the insight that towns like Corpus Christi had a "power structure" to write an appendix to his masters thesis detailing that structure of power in his hometown Atlantic, Iowa. He often remarked that he was hurt worse from being beaten in Texas than he ever was in the military, although he had suffered an injury while at sea in that ended his naval career and gave him back problems the rest of his life.

Every one of his books, from the polemical *The United States, Cuba, and Castro* to the mammoth *The Roots of the Modern American Empire*, to the suggestive *The Great Evasion, An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of Karl Marx* to the book of readings on diplomatic history *The Shaping of American Diplomacy* to his two polemical syntheses *America Confronts a Revolutionary World, 1776-1976* and *Empire As a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative* are discussed, analyzed, and put into context. Responses of reviewers are detailed, demonstrating how petty and overtly political many "mainstream" scholars can behave when confronted with serious challenges. Buhle and Rice-Maximin pull no punches where Williams's books fail, such as *The Great Evasion*, or where they reveal serious omissions, such as in the persistent failure to confront the role of African-Americans as full subjects of history rather than

objects of control from above. They are also quite candid about his personal failings, which were unfortunately significant for many of the people closest to him.

The book also covers his years after leaving Madison, Wisconsin for Oregon State University, including his ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful year as President of the Organization of American Historians in 1980. In his last decade, he once again became involved as a public intellectual, writing a serious column for Oregon newspapers, and "thinking seriously about alternatives" to the American Empire. Buhle and Rice-Maximin describe a fine article he published in a short-lived journal, *democracy*, entitled "Radicals and Regionalism," which presented his vision that struggling for a regional division of the U.S. continental empire was a useful focus for radicals weary of confronting the Empire at the national level. After that article, Williams took his own advice and wrote on western regional concerns.

His passing in 1990 deprived us all of a great mind. I can imagine him now, firing off reviews of books like *The End of History*, commenting wryly on the views of the "second thought" generation—including his erstwhile students and admirers like David Horowitz, Ronald Radosh, and Eugene Genovese. Better still, I can imagine how he would have scorned the self-congratulatory know-nothingism of the intellectuals celebrating the victory of the United States in the Cold War. The U.S. war for the "open door" policy to the Persian Gulf would have saddened but not surprised him. The need to go on the economic offensive for "access to closed markets" in, for example, Japan was nothing more than a 1990s version of Commodore Perry's black ships in Tokyo Bay. The need to maintain cold-war military budgets when the supposed enemy no longer exists would remind him that the first dangerous "communist hordes" confronted by U.S. imperialists were the Mexican revolutionaries. The intermingling of self-interest and missionary-like idealism that bespoke our country's involvement in Somalia and Bosnia would have merely echoed that very same marriage of idealism and expansionism as necessity that he and his students and colleagues had discovered and exposed in that great icon of U.S. internationalism Woodrow Wilson. He could have smiled with a sense of vindication as he reminded his liberal critics: "I told you our expansionist impulse had nothing to do with 'godless Communism.' If we don't stop now before we plunge headlong into an attempt to rule the world, we are *really doomed* this time!"

NOTES

1. Similar events in *MR* history should be noted at this point: Monthly Review Press was founded in 1952 because no publisher would put out I.F. Stone's *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (Monthly Review Press, 1952). In 1956, a British publisher refused to fulfill their promise to publish Paul Baran's *The Political Economy of Growth* and so Monthly Review Press brought it out in 1962.
2. Some truth in packaging is in order here. I am a personal friend of Paul Buhle's. I am acknowledged for reading the book in manuscript form before publication. I was a lifelong admirer of Bill Williams and had the pleasure of taking a graduate course with him at the University of Wisconsin. My first scholarly publication was a review article of *The Roots of Modern American Empire* (*Radical America*, August, 1970: 29-53). When my brother and I wrote *We are Your Sons* in 1975, Bill contributed a moving personal quote for the book jacket. I consider Bill Williams the historian who has shaped my personal and professional way of looking at U.S. history and particularly U.S. imperialism, therefore I am not a "neutral" observer of his work and his life, nor an impartial reviewer of this book.
3. For example, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. privately attacked Williams as a pro-communist scholar in 1954. The book documents Schlesinger's life-long efforts to denigrate Williams and the positions he and others took on the origins of the Cold War.
4. See William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York, W.W. Norton, 1988), pp. 131-142.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.
6. Schlesinger has thirty separate entries in the Index and six of these are multipage. The discussion of Schlesinger's "blow the whistle" article runs from pp. 187-193. Even in the late 1980s, Schlesinger was attempting to exorcise the influence of Williams from the history profession in *Cycles of American History* (Houghton-Mifflin: Boston, 1986). Later he turned his sights against the "political correctness" of multiculturalism in *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991). Buhle and Rice-Maximin make short shrift of Schlesinger's efforts and refer the readers to useful, more complete rebuttals.
7. James Maddox, *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 1973). Maddox's book, with expected praise by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. was celebrated in the reactionary journals. Surprisingly, however, after running a favorable review, the *New York Times Book Review* gave equal space for each of the attacked individuals to respond, and the mainstream historical profession wrote very negatively about Maddox's screed. Francis Lowenheim "Who Started It? You Did! Who Says So? We Do! Who Are You,?" *The New York Times Book Review*, (17 June, 1973): 1, 6-7. The commentaries of Williams, Gabriel Kolko, Diane Shaver Clemens, David Horowitz, Lloyd Gardner, D.F. Fleming, and Gar Alperovitz appear in the same issue, pp. 8-10.

Progress and History

by Alexander Saxton

James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Taught Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 372 pp. \$24.95, hardcover.

One of the several tidal waves set into motion by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is a reconstruction of how U.S. history was written and how it is taught in the colleges and universities. Starting with African Americans and moving on to American Indians, Asians, and Latinos, the revisionists sought to integrate the experiences of racial minorities and other repressed or silenced groups into the mainstream of historiography. The effort resulted in defining workers and women as social classes.

Linked socially and ideologically to affirmative action, this reconstruction of history proved to be a marvelously rewarding enterprise, and for those directly engaged in it (including both James Loewen and myself) it seemed to promise revolutionary changes in historical self-perception and perhaps even in U.S. society itself. We imagined a nation shucking off its old racial and gender separations as it moved toward a more inclusive and participatory democracy.

Such hopes had faded by the mid-1980s. The war on poverty gave way to deregulation and free-market profiteering. Affirmative action foundered on the rocks of white racism. Social scientists and historians, especially those who had taken the lead in cleaning up

Alexander Saxton, recently retired, taught history at UCLA. He is the author of *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement* and *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America*.

U.S. historical writing a decade earlier, now faced the task of explaining what had gone wrong. *Lies My Teacher Taught Me* makes an impressive contribution to their effort.

Professor Loewen, who teaches Sociology at the University of Vermont, devoted two years' study at the Smithsonian to examining the "leading high school textbooks of U.S. history." Essentially he reports that the revisionist efforts in colleges and universities made scarcely a dent in the way U.S. history is taught in the high schools. This failure to change the high schools left the way open for a resurgence of racist and sexist politics a couple of decades later and to a delegitimation of affirmative action. Although most textbooks have eliminated overtly racist and sexist language, Loewen believes that such improvements have remained mainly cosmetic because they have not been anchored in any fundamental change in content. The texts present, as they always have, fundamentally mythical and celebrationist narratives. They personify the nation as a kindly white hero who, with a few misunderstandings and setbacks, marches forward and sets things right. The cosmetic improvements, which lack logical links to the underlying narratives, may easily be dismissed by high school readers as concessions to "political correctness."

Loewen's critique of his selected textbooks consists in identifying and debunking the myths and falsifications they have in common. Arranged chronologically, they include the Columbian "discovery" and the First Thanksgiving, the "savagery" of the American Indians, the patriarchal legend of plantation slavery, and the *Gone-With-the-Wind* rendering of Reconstruction. Moving on to class and gender, Loewen exposes the rags-to-riches fairy tale of the United States as the land of equal opportunity and upward mobility. He confronts, finally, the notion of progress itself in its social-Darwinian interpretations, which make the visible realities of class and exploitation out to be temporary, benign, and necessary dimensions of progress.

Having demonstrated the prevalence of such mythologies, Loewen sets about debunking them. His search-and-destroy missions are extraordinarily far-reaching. Concise, solidly documented, often funny, and sometimes brilliant, they comprise the finest part of Loewen's book. They will equip students of U.S. history and especially their teachers with invaluable resources for demystification. Not only can they deconstruct lies absorbed in high school but, as Howard Zinn writes in his cover commentary, Loewen's accounts comprise "a one-volume education in itself." Loewen must think it

ironic that all these riches flowed out from the Smithsonian on the very eve of that institution's capitulation in the battle of the *Enola Gay*.

So far so good. There are some difficulties. Although Loewen justly criticizes authors of high school texts for their conceptual inconsistency, he leaves his readers in the dark about his own explanatory model. Why do high school history texts stay so bad? Authors? Publishers? State adoption boards? The Power elite? All of us? I prefer to choose examples from the central and most important part of Loewen's book—the debunking section.

High school texts have outrageously misrepresented John Brown and Abraham Lincoln, both of whom sought to destroy slavery by arming slaves. Although they were contemporaries, the record indicates that Lincoln shared deeply in white supremacist assumptions, while Brown consistently championed an egalitarian antiracism. How may we explain this contradiction? In a totally different context, Loewen tells us that he considers "social class" to be "probably the single most important variable in society." If so, we should expect it to have some bearing on life and death commitments like those of Brown and Lincoln. Loewen makes no such use of it. On the contrary, developing a concept of "racial idealism," he asserts that their actions "show us how idealistic were the officeholders of the Republican party," and admonishes textbook authors to present antislavery leaders "in such a way that we might again value our own idealism."

My perception has been that most Republicans and Free Soilers opposed slavery because they came to see it as detrimental to their own class interests and aspirations. In trying to destroy slavery they occasionally and for the most part opportunistically took stands against white racism. To rely on "anti-racist idealism" for the explication of such behavior brings Loewen perilously close to Gunnar Myrdal's "American Creed."¹ I say "perilously" not to diminish Myrdal's important work, but because conservative scholars like Nathan Glazer and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., whom Loewen sharply criticizes have adopted such idealist concepts in order to blame racial minorities for their own subordinate status.²

Although I do not have space in this review to trace out the connections, I believe that I could show that Loewen's ambivalence with respect to class as an explanatory factor also conditions his handling of the difficult concept of "progress." However that may be, several contradictions do crop up in Loewen's ferocious debunking of progress as a reactionary myth.

Faith in progress . . . has promoted the status quo . . . been particularly useful to the upper class . . . also fits in with social Darwinism, which implies that the lower class is lower owing to its own fault. Progress as an ideology has been intrinsically antirevolutionary . . .

The thrust of these negatives is to equate the concept of progress with “faith that the future is automatically getting better.” Yet the two remain crucially different. “Faith” in automatic or inevitable progress is indeed reactionary, whereas the concept of progress itself—far from being antirevolutionary—has served as key-stone in every revolutionary ideology at least since the Enlightenment. Enlightenment-bashing, now so popular in academic circles, aims precisely at denying the possibilities of progressive history. I think that Loewen is yielding ground here that he cannot afford to give up.

To engage in debunking myths and falsifications in history textbooks requires a prior assumption of the possibility of achieving objective knowledge through empirical study—an assumption common to all sciences, physical and social. Without such assumptions there would be no point in exposing historical falsehoods since the only outcome would be to make room for other myths and falsehoods.

This observation leads us to the question “Can social actions aimed at changing the direction of human history be based on objective perceptions of history?” We have no need here to debate this gigantic question. Judging from his words, Loewen must answer “yes.” One quote will suffice, and I take it from the final page of his book:

We need to produce Americans of all social-class and racial backgrounds and of both genders who command the power of history . . . Such Americans are ready to become citizens, because they understand how to effect change in our society.

To “effect change” through “the power (knowledge?) of history” seems likely to bring about improvements of the human conditions, if only sometimes. In that case we can assert that progress is possible—never automatic, never inevitable—always possible.

The author of *Lies* might reply that problems in historical theory will require different books, more complex arguments. Maybe so. Yet without at least some clues as to where such arguments might lead, he is leaving apertures open to the enemy in an otherwise admirably useful and tightly-constructed work.

NOTES

1. Myrdal, Gunnar *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 8-14.
2. Glazer, Nathan *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 3-22, 72-73.

Continued from inside back cover

This means that for a decent livable future, the replacement of capitalism by socialism is an absolute necessity. It does not mean that struggles in the here and now to force capital to make concessions to the needs of the people are unimportant; on the contrary, it is only through such struggles that people will learn to need and make the revolution.

Why has the erstwhile two-branch socialist movement become a single revolutionary socialist movement? Here we must be content with a couple of suggestions. (1) The world-wide success of capital in imposing its rule has rendered reformist gradualism irrelevant. Its adherents have therefore tended either to give up their socialism or, in a few cases, their reformism. (2) The world-wide failure of capitalism to check, let alone reverse, the deterioration of mass living conditions has strengthened revolutionaries in their conviction that capitalism must go. These developments should set the stage for a new upsurge in the socialist movement in which old quarrels can be transcended and new methods of organization and struggle can be realized.

Several errors crept into Paul Burkett's review of Samir Amin's book, *Re-Reading the Postwar Era* in the April issue of *MR*. The last sentence of the first full paragraph on page 49 should read: "At the same time I think this angle of vision sometimes leads him to focus on core-periphery accumulation *while neglecting to probe too deeply into the proliferating contradictions of core capital accumulation* in its twentieth-century phase." The italicized clause was omitted from the printed version, a printer's error that was not caught by the proofreader. (2) Page 50, line 8 from the bottom: the clause beginning in the middle of this line should read: "while treating accumulation itself in purely institutional terms *as* simply placing certain institutional demands on this technological and institutional structure." The printed version had "and" in place of the italicized "as"—also a printer's error not caught by the proofreader. (3) Page 50, line 4 from the bottom: "within" should read "between"—an error of a copyeditor who shall remain anonymous. But if you really want to know his/her name, it can be had by an e-mail inquiry.

There was also an error in Jack Weston's review of Constance Coiner's *Better Red* in the March 1996 issue. On the first line of p. 53, the word "invasion" should be "evacuation."

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ing these institutions would have first to acquire them, as indeed had been happening through popular struggles in the advanced capitalist countries since the late nineteenth century. The Communists, broadly defined, agreed that this would be the desirable way to go but were convinced that capitalist ruling classes would abandon democratic institutions rather than allow them to be used to bring about systemic changes. It followed that the attainment of socialism would inevitably involve a violent confrontation whether initiated by the right or the left. Hence the division of the movement into its two major branches—reformist or gradualism on the one hand and revolutionary on the other.

So much for the situation as it existed after the Second World War. Since then, and largely as the result of the war and its aftermath, the situation has radically changed. While there are masses of people all over the world who are deeply alienated by or from the status quo—almost everywhere capitalism in one or another state of development—the socialist movements that once sought to replace capitalism have largely ceased to exist. Faced with the reality of unchallenged global capitalist power, the Social Democrats have little by little abandoned their erstwhile long-range goal of socialism and adjusted their policies to the requirements of capitalism. In the process as well they have jettisoned their socialist beliefs and assumed the role of competitor for the privilege (and emoluments) of managing capitalist society. So far capitalists have shown few signs of welcoming their would-be helpers, but that may change as the overall crisis of capitalism deepens.

The postwar evolution of the Communist branch of the old socialist movement is much more complicated, and no attempt to generalize about it will be made here. Suffice it to say that while some of its adherents, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, have gone along with the Social Democrats in giving up their socialist goal, many more have not. Today, all over the world, there are large numbers of individuals, on their own or affiliated with small groups or parties, whose commitment to socialism remains unshaken and in many cases has been strengthened by the events of the last few years. Given the checkered history of the postwar period, however, it would be misleading to continue using the Communist label in this connection, even though there are many who continue to identify themselves as such.

What, then is the most appropriate term for describing the present-day inheritors of and continuators of the old Communist branch of the socialist movement? The answer, it seems to us, is “revolutionary socialist” or just plain “revolutionary” with socialist clearly implied. But this doesn’t mean that in our part of the world those of us who describe ourselves this way believe that in this stage of history our efforts should be concentrated on organizing a revolution (which doesn’t imply a denial that it may be the main task in other parts of the world). What we do believe is that capitalism is the enemy of humankind (and of many other forms of life as well) and that as long as it lasts the condition of the world’s people will continue to deteriorate.

Continued on page 60

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